

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISTANB 01211 081033Z
ACTION EUR-12

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SUBJ: VIOLENCE ACCOMPANIES INCREASED POLITICAL ACTIVITY

REF: ISTANBUL 1076

SUMMARY: TERRORIST BOMBINGS, BANK ROBBERIES AND CAMPUS CLASHES
BETWEEN LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST STUDENTS MADE LAST TWO WEEKS
PARTICULARLY
INTENSE PERIOD OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ISTANBUL, BUT AUTHORITIES
MAINTAINED CONTROL OF SITUATION AND POPULACE REMAINED CALM. HOWEVER,
SHOULD SUCH POLITICAL VIOLENCE KEEP UP (AND POLICE INDICATE IT MIGHT
CONTINUE), CITY'S MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS COULD BE OCCASION FOR MAJOR
DISRUPTIVE EVENTS. MEANWHILE, PRELIMINARY ELECTION CAMPAIGN RALLIES
BY OPPOSITION LEADER ECEVIT AND ERBAKAN WERE HELD IN CONSULAR
DISTRICT.

ECEVIT GOT HUGE TURNOUT IN BURSA, AND ERBAKAN RALLY WAS MARKED BY HIS
YOUNG SUPPORTERS' ATTACK ON LOCAL REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY(400)
HEADQUARTERS. PROSPECTS HERE ARE FOR ELECTION CAMPAIGN ACCOMPANIED
BY CONSIDERABLE VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.

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PAGE 02 ISTANB 01211 081033Z

1. DAILY INCIDENTS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAVE CONTINUED SINCE
REFTEL MAKING THIS MEMORABLE PERIOD FOR SUCH ACTIVITY. SPARKED BY
COMMEMORATION OF DEATH OF CELEBRATED TERRORIST AND
SPURRED BY HEIGHTENED POLITICAL PASSIONS IN ANTICIPATION OF EARLY
ELECTIONS, ESCALATING STUDENT CLASHES CULMINATED IN VIRTUAL OPEN
STREET WARFARE ON MARCH 31 BETWEEN RIVAL LEFTIST AND RIGHTIST

DORMITORIES IN VICINITY OF ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY. NINE BANK ROBBERIES, WHICH COLLECTED MORE THAN U.S.\$100,000 OVER PAST TWO WEEKS IN ISTANBUL, ARE WIDELY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BY TERRORIST GROUPS. IN ADDITION TO THOSE REPORTED REFTEL, TERRORIST BOMBINGS CONTINUED DURING WEEK WITH LIGHT DAMAGE TO SEVERAL BANKS. POLICE INFORMED CONSULATE GENERAL THAT THEIR INFORMATION INDICATES MORE TERRORIST INCIDENTS POSSIBLE DURING NEXT FEW DAYS.

2. CONSULAR DISTRICT ALSO WITNESSED MORE TRADITIONAL POLITICAL ACTIVITY APRIL 2 WITH REPUBLICAN PEOPLES PARTY (RPP) LEADER BULENT ECEVIT HOLDING RALLY IN BURSA AND NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY'S (NSP) NECMETTIN ERBAKAN STAGING ONE IN LULEBURGAZ, KIRKLARELI. LATTER MARRED BY OUTBREAK OF VIOLENCE. AFTER ERBAKAN'S SPEECH, NSP YOUTH REPORTEDLY ATTACKED RPP OFFICE, AND BATTLE BETWEEN NSP AND RPP YOUTH GROUPS NARROWLY AVERTED. COMMENTS BY ERBAKAN IN LULEBURGAZ HIGHLIGHTED BY NEWSPAPERS WERE HEATED ATTACKS ON BOTH RPP AND HIS COALITION PARTNER, JUSTICE PARTY (JP) FOR, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE LIKELIHOOD THAT IF LEFT TO THEMSELVES THEY WOULD "LOSE" CYPRUS AND ENTER EUROPEAN COMMON MARKET.

3. RPP INSIDER WHO IS FROM BURSA EXPRESSED SURPRISE AT HUGE TURN-OUT FOR ECEVIT AND ATTRIBUTED SIZE OF RALLY IN LARGE PART TO ACCELERATED INDUSTRIALIZATION IN BURSA AREA OVER PAST SEVERAL YEARS. (PRESS ACCOUNTS CONFIRM THAT GATHERING WAS UNUSUALLY LARGE, AND THIS IN PROVINCE GENERALLY CONSIDERED CONSERVATIVE STRONGHOLD; RPP WON ONLY 28 PERCENT OF VOTE THERE IN 1973 ELECTION.) IN HIS BURSA SPEECH, ECEVIT EMPHASIZED NEED FOR EARLY ELECTIONS "IN ORDER TO LIBERATE TURKISH NATION FROM PRESENT GOVERNMENT." HE WAS OPTIMISTIC LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ISTANB 01211 081033Z

THAT RPP COULD GAIN MAJORITY IN UPCOMING ELECTIONS, CITING STEADY GROWTH OF RPP VOTE IN LAST THREE ELECTIONS. ECEVIT ALSO CONTRASTED HIS FOREIGN POLICY PERFORMANCE AS PRIME MINISTER TO THAT OF DEMIREL, NOTING HIS ACTIONS TO LIFT BAN ON CULTIVATION OF OPIUM POPPIES (WITHOUT WORRYING" AS DEMIREL DID" ABOUT WHAT AMERICA WOULD SAY) TO PROVIDE FREEDOM FOR CYPRIOT TURKS AND TO ASSERT TURKISH RIGHTS IN AEGEAN.

4. COMMENT: AS POLITICAL GROUPS GEAR UP FOR ELECTION CAMPAIGN, DESPITE FLURRY OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS, ISTANBUL AND ENVIRONS ARE CALM AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN CONTROL OF SITUATION. ALTHOUGH UNABLE TO PREVENT STUDENT VIOLENCE ON NUMEROUS AND SCATTERED CAMPUSES IN THIS SPRAWLING CITY, POLICE HAVE REACTED QUICKLY ONCE CLASHES BEGIN AND HAVE BEEN ABLE TO AT LEAST LIMIT SCALE OF BLOODSHED. ON OTHER HAND AUTHORITIES HAVE HAD ONLY LIMITED SUCCESS IN CRACKING DOWN ON TERRORIST GROUPS RESPONSIBLE FOR BOMBINGS AND ARMED ROBBERIES AND WE EXPECT THIS ACTIVITY TO CONTINUE. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN RECENT RUMBLINGS IN LABOR CIRCLES IN ISTANBUL WHERE REPORTEDLY SOME 16 STRIKES INVOLVING ABOUT 6000 WORKERS ARE IN PROGRESS. APPROACHING

MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS BY LEFTIST DISK LABOR CONFEDERATION, WHICH STAGED MASSIVE RALLY IN CENTER OF CITY LAST YEAR, COULD BE OCCASION FOR SERIOUS DISRUPTION. COMBINATION OF STUDENT CLASHES, TERRORIST ACTIVITY AND POTENTIAL LABOR STRIFE ACCOMPANIED BY INTRA-PARTY SQUABBLES PROVIDE INGREDIENTS FOR AN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN PUNCTUATED BY CONSIDERABLE VIOLENCE. END SUMMARY.
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